

A story by

Lancelot Schaubert

THE Elevator OUT



Illustrated by Allen Forrest



Jackson was kicking and tossing lame-old walnuts. He had just been wishing and waiting for a way out of his boring yard,



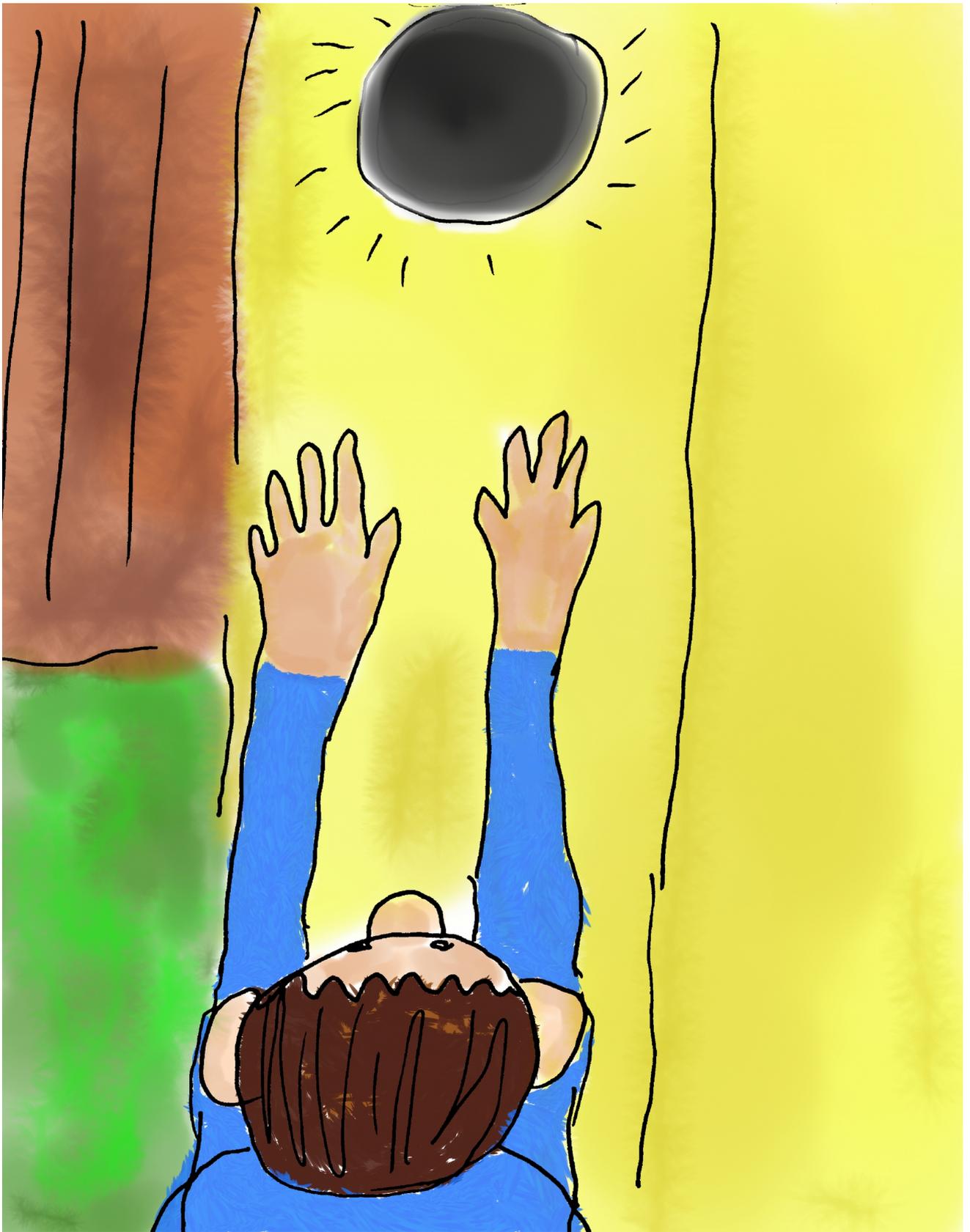
out from under grey, heavy-bellied clouds.



When he saw the golden elevator box, which sat there thrumming, vrumming, stuck in the highest grass, Jackson dropped his walnuts to the earth and walked up to the doors.



Above his head, a bright glowing button blinked. Blinking. Blinking and glowed and then went dark.



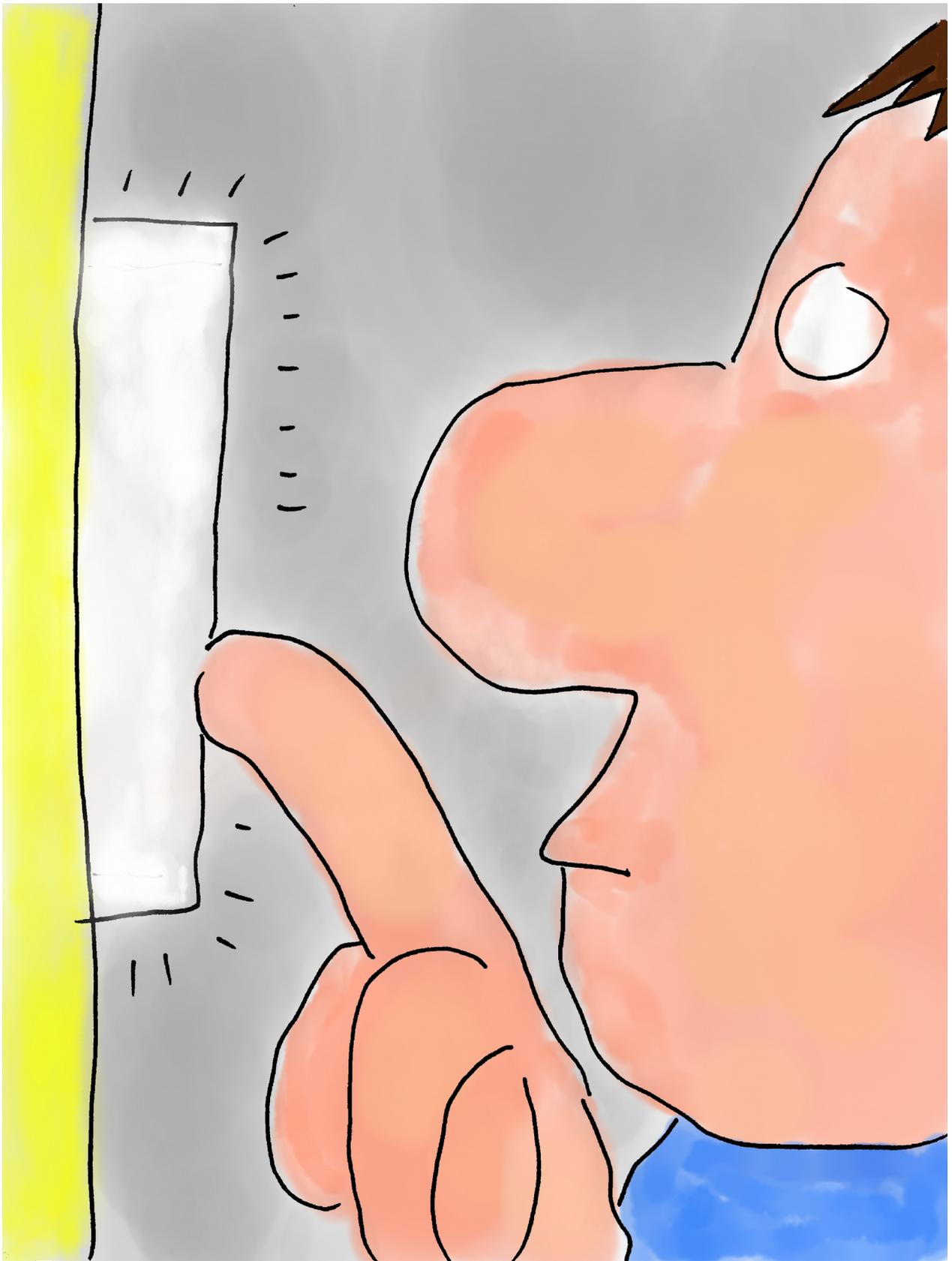
He waited for the light to come again, for glows like fireflies to rise inside the button but none did. He tried to reach, to touch the little button. Both arms were still too short.



Big rocks, stones, and tiny pebbles Jackson stacked.



then climbed until his eyes met the button.



He touched it with his finger. Then he pushed.



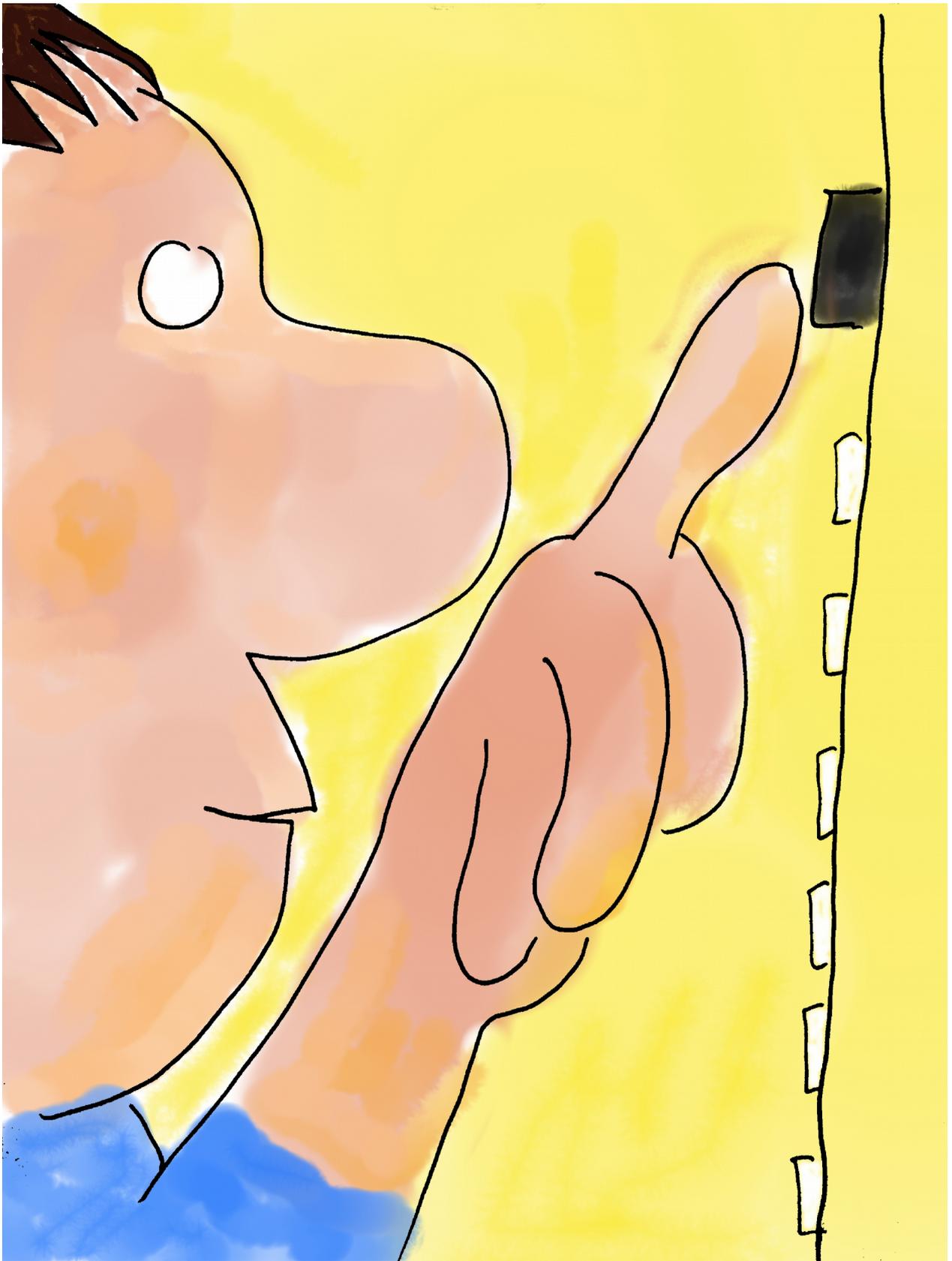
Shimmering glimmering light shone out of the button and the doors split, then slid right open. No men or beasts or trinkets hid inside and so he clambered down the pile of rocks, shoved them over onto the floor,



and closed the door with the facing arrows button. Then he saw the numbers piling high above his head in five columns but Jackson didn't know his numbers well. He looked at the top, the tippy top topper button, the one that was painted all in black.



He stacked and stacked and stacked his rocks upon the slippery elevator floor.



He reached and reached and stretched to reach the button.



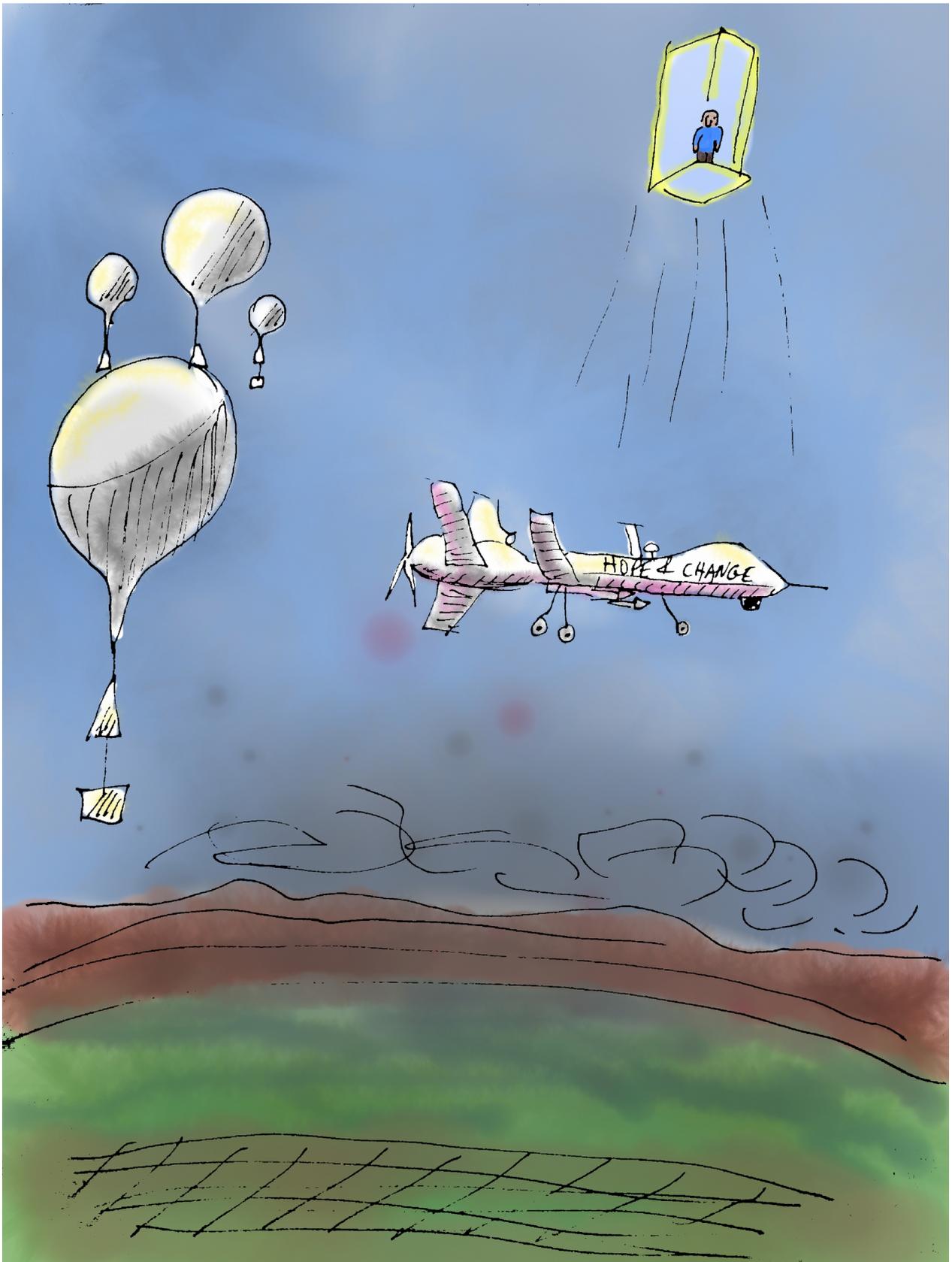
When he hit it, his body hit the floor, the rocks fell down, the elevator whooshed into the air.



And the elevator shed its golden box. And he watched it fade and shrink way down below. And then he noticed why he could see. The elevator walls were made of glass. The low earth faded underneath. He saw his house, his neighbor's house, his street,



his town, his county. He passed a flock of starlings, then, who chased a hawk away. A little plane flew by – the pilot waved,



a silver weather balloon that was blinking, a giant string of blinking weather balloons like a smuck of jellyfish wrapping round the earth. He saw a drone, his state below. He flew right through so many clouds, the sounds, the sounds of shrinking air.



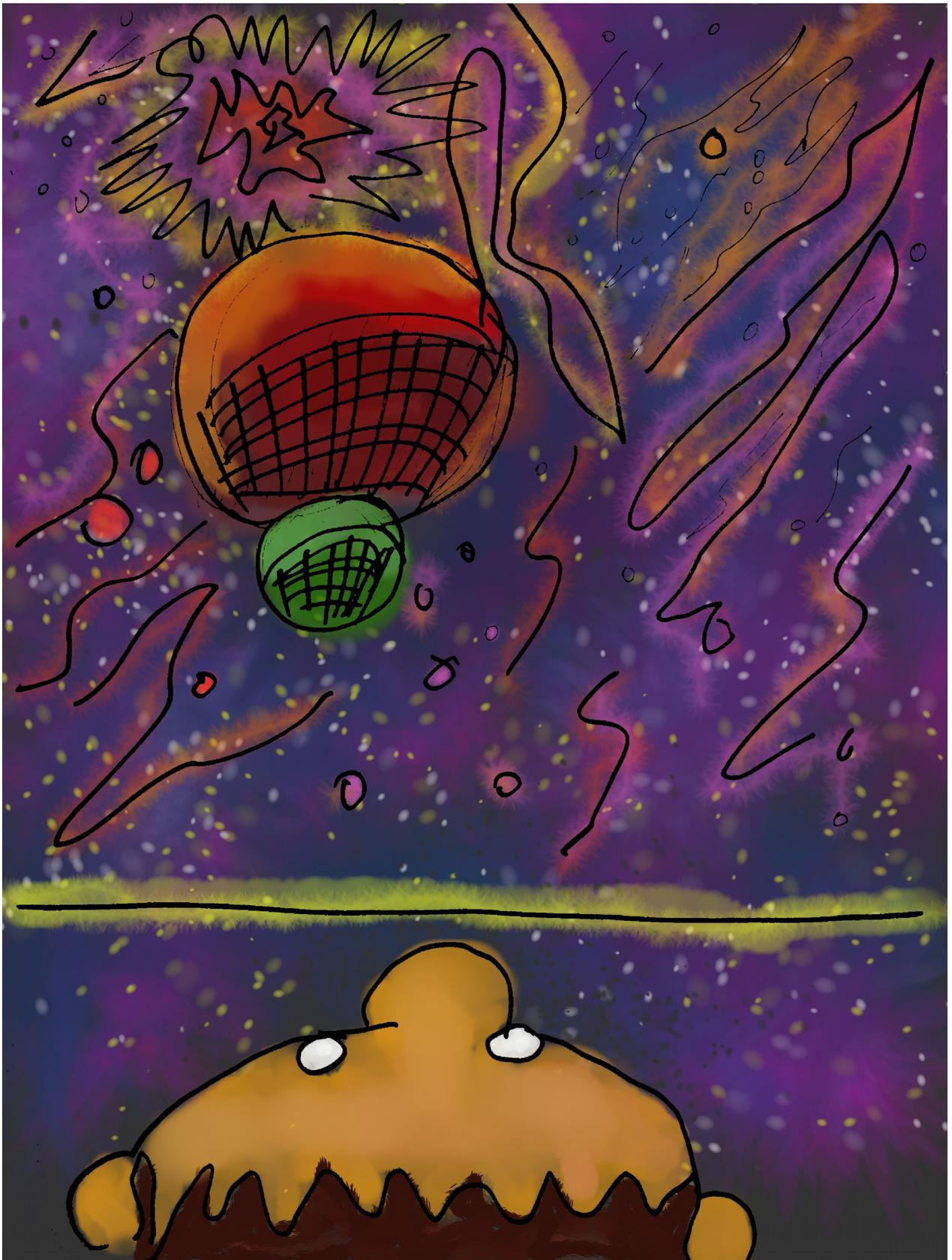
He passed three camera satellites that were pointing out into the outer skies and sixty-six pointed down at his house, he saw explosions below, and hurricanes and giant waves,



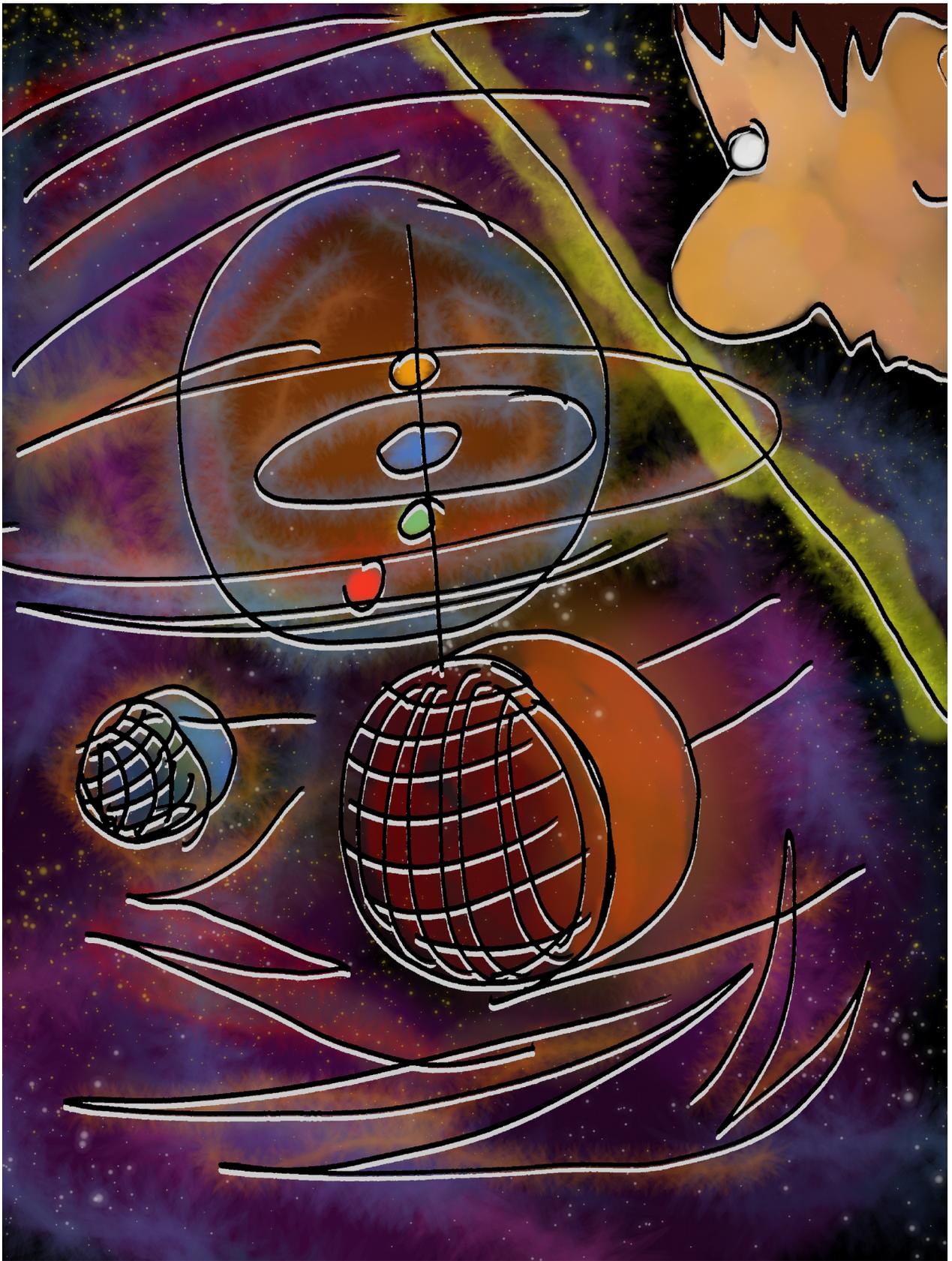
but up and up he went through the lower skies.



The moon, he passed, and Mercury, the sun he passed, and black with far-flung stars.
He passed by asteroids and Neptune, then a comet, other worlds, a deep-space
probe, and way out past the Milky Way.



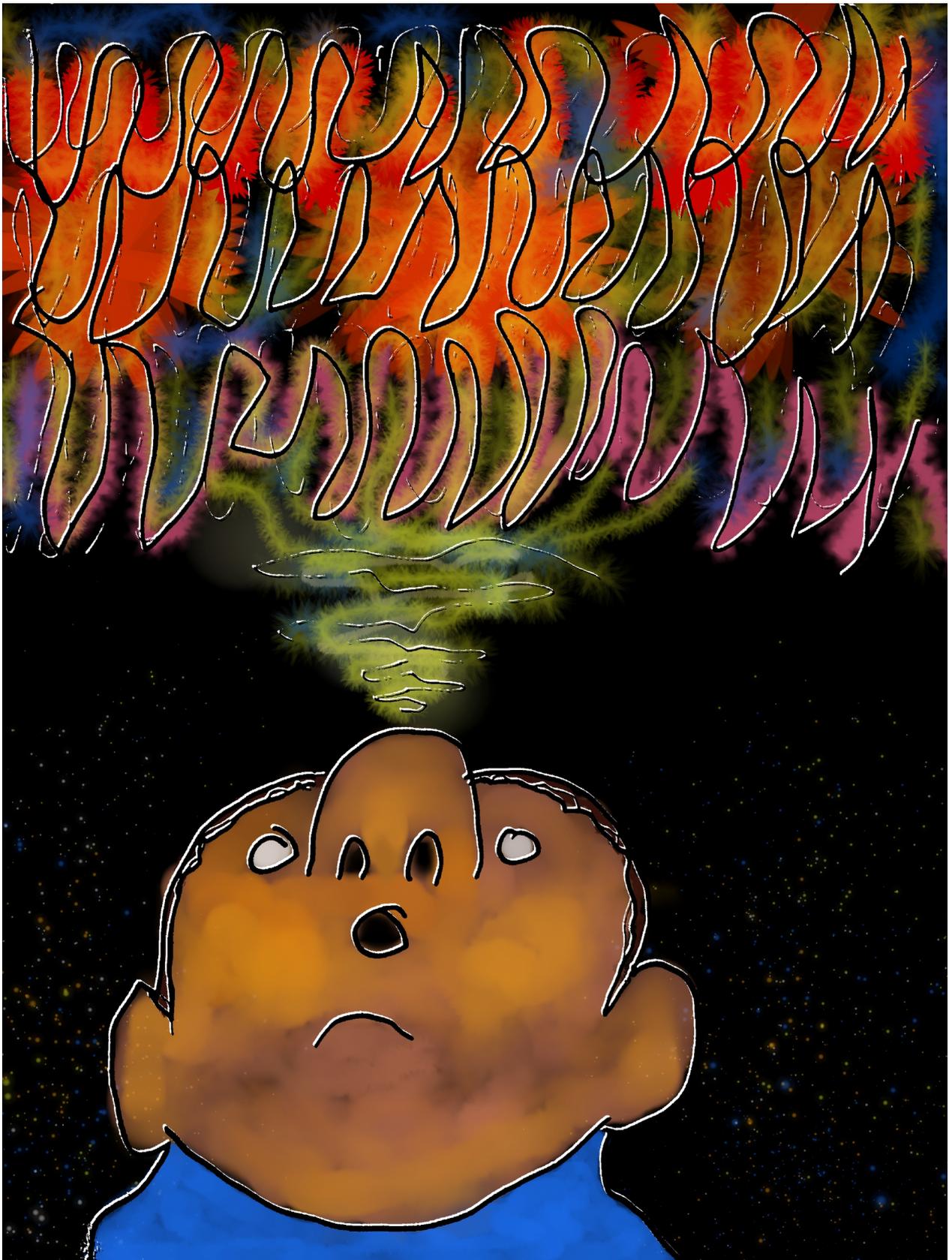
Galaxies and galaxies and belts of new stars passed and Jackson asked, “is this the higher sky?”



Then black and black with stars behind, a black hole, black, a nova, black,



a moon shaped like a pie. Eventually he came to the end of the highest part of the lowest sky.



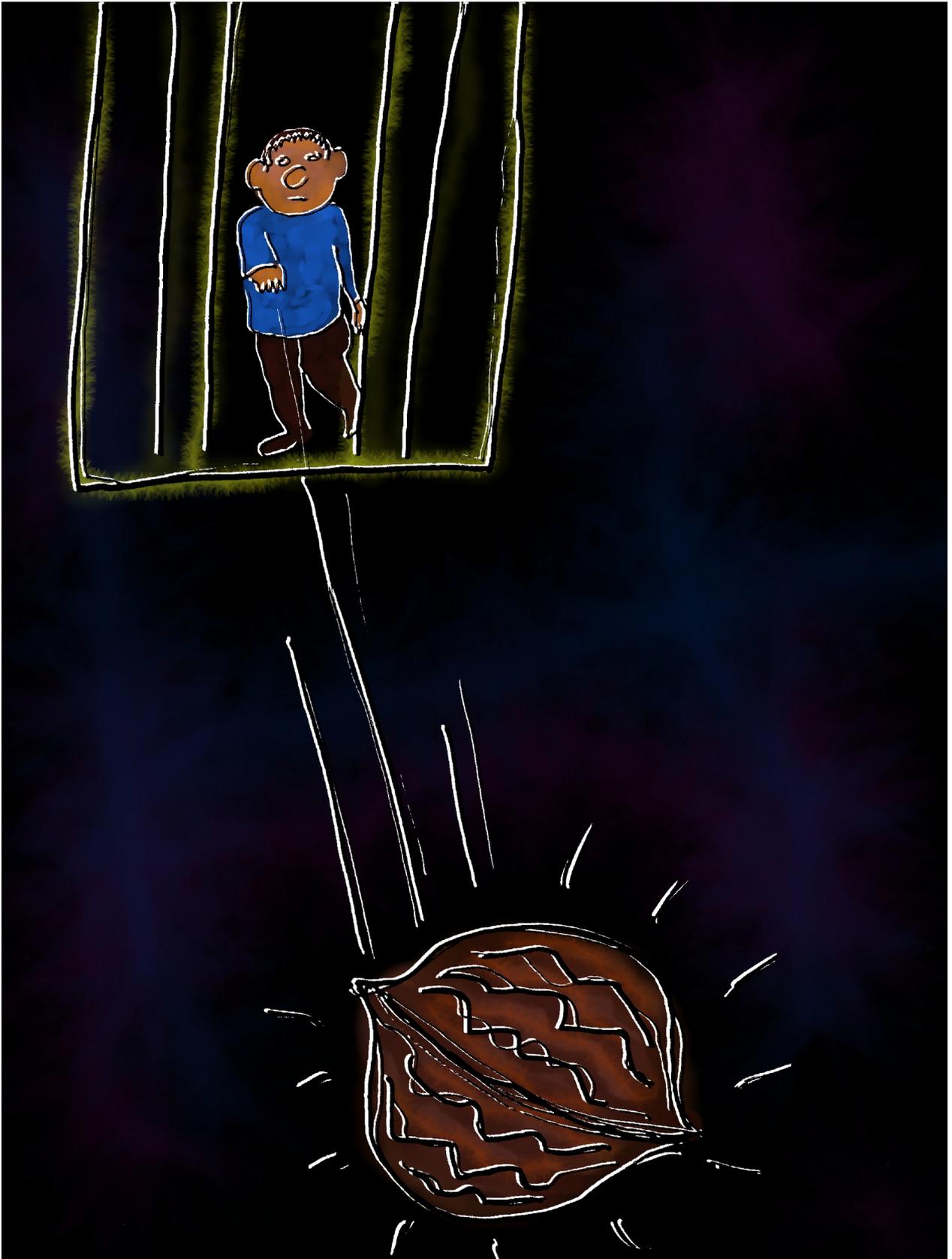
He passed through the waters that hold the womb of the worlds and came outside outer space into...nothing. Nothing. Neverness. And Jackson couldn't feel the space or the lightness or the air sucking away.



He couldn't see the stars in the distant distance of the black. The nothing was just all-black nothing with nothing ahead and neverness behind, above, around. Jackson didn't like the nothing. He thought something should be there. He felt as if something was there, even just beyond the nothing. For the nothing didn't make a lick of sense.



So he dug around in his pocket and found one last lame old walnut.



He opened up the glass of the elevator doors and tossed the walnut deep into neverness. Where it landed and...



Bloomed!



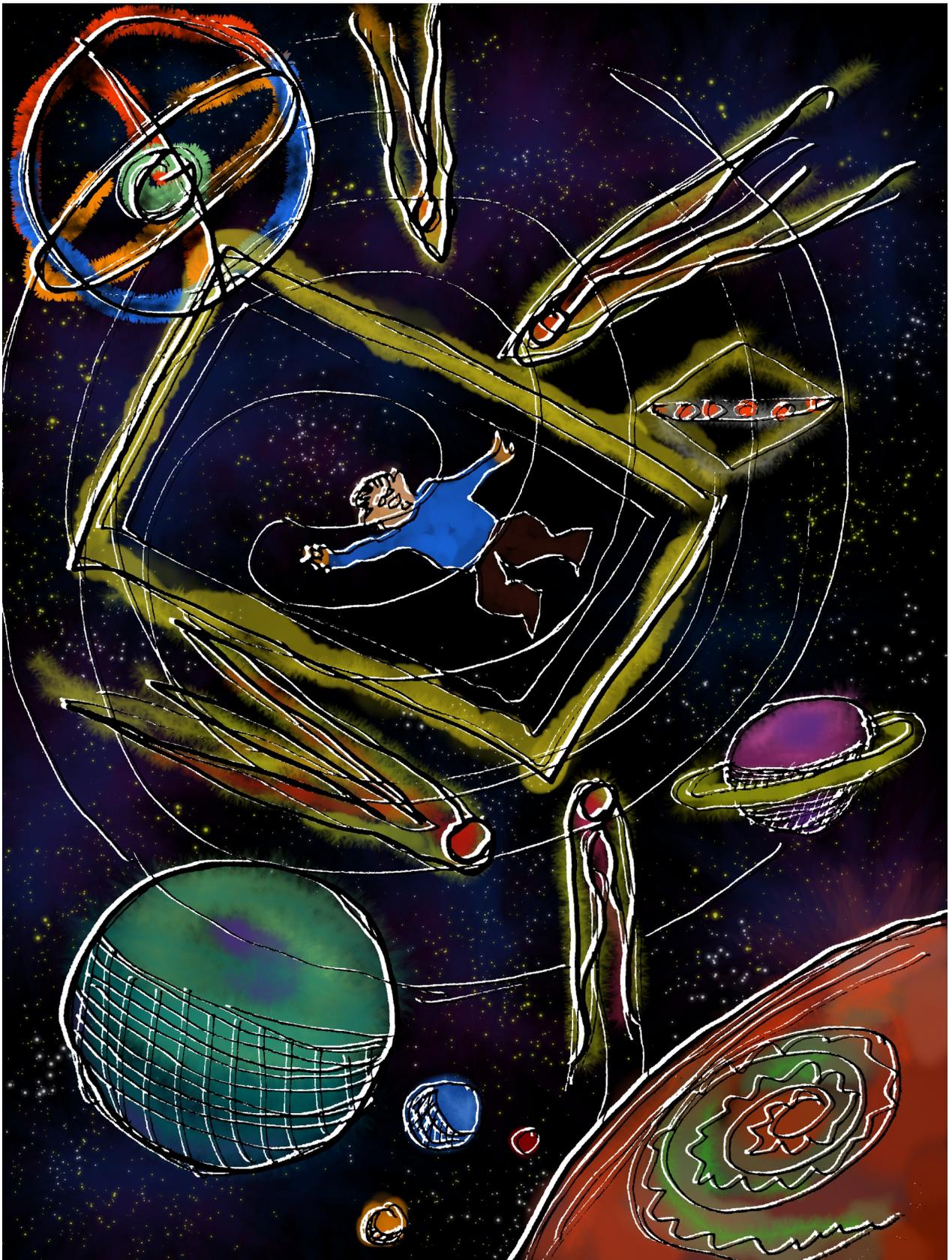
It shot up – roots then trunk then branches, leaves, great world-sized boughs, and sprigs like cedars.



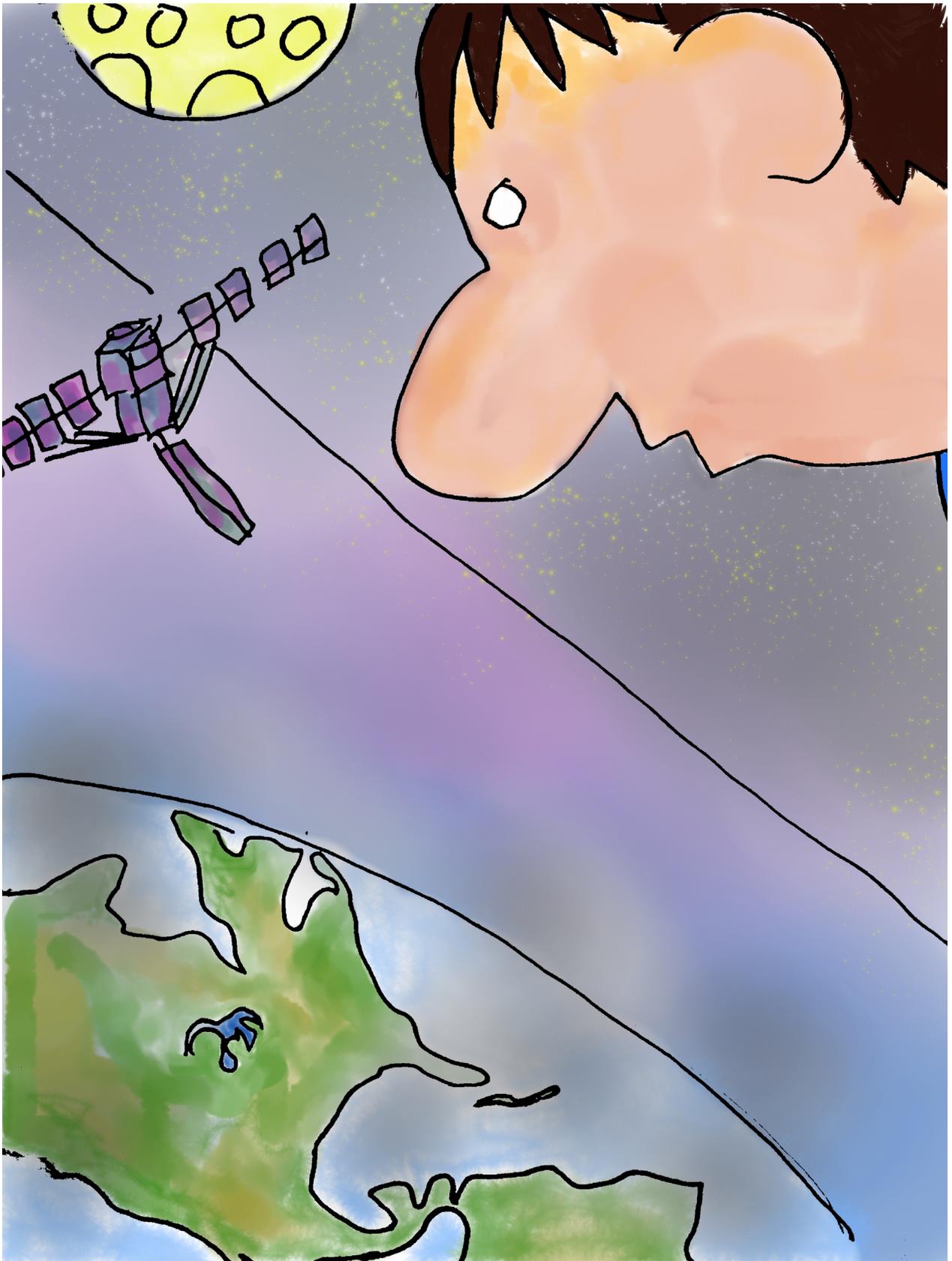
It filled the nothing and grew so large that Jackson thought it might crush him flat, thought it might destroy him.



So he pressed a blinking button on the bottom of the list and huddled in the corner there and waited.



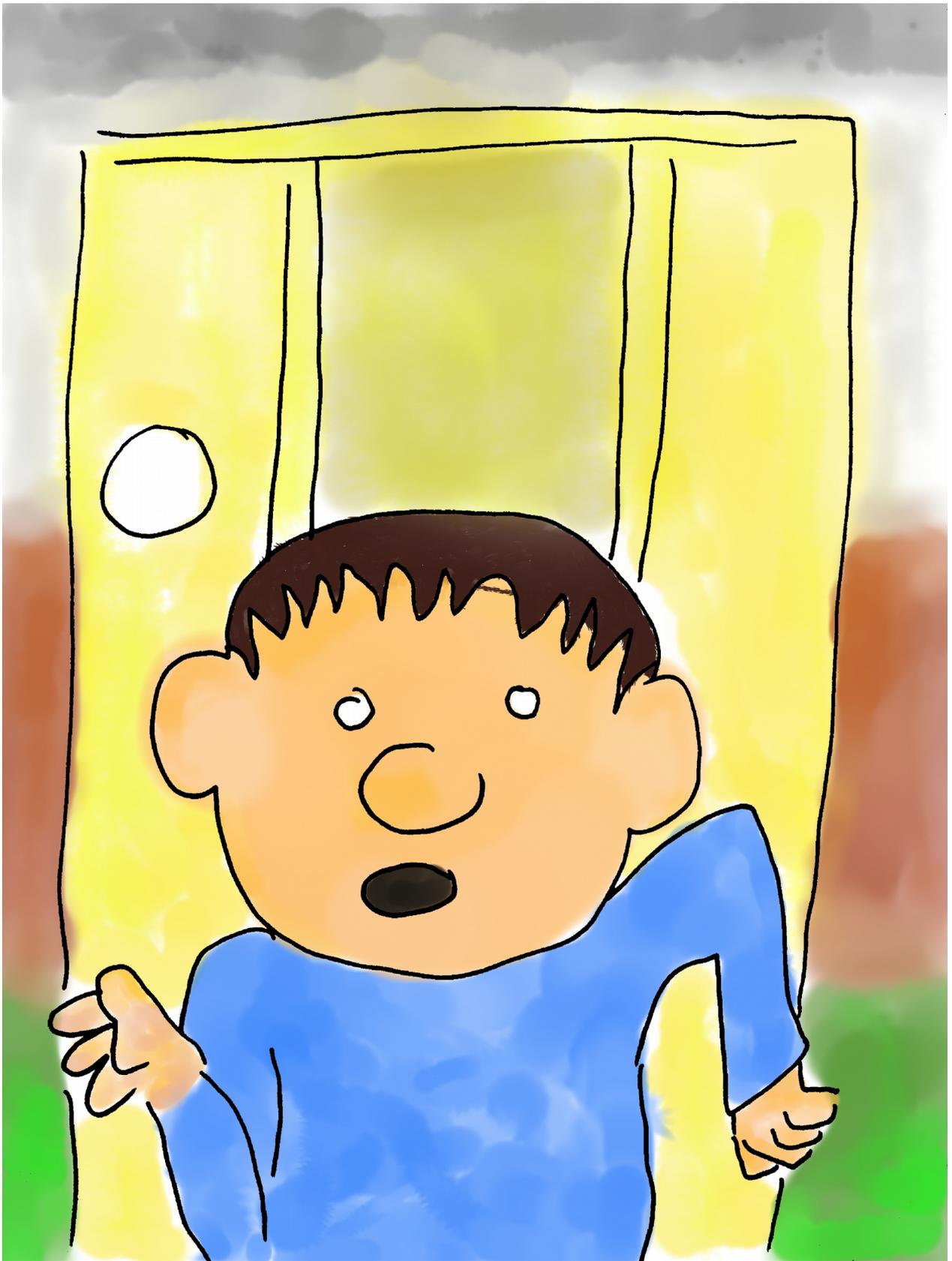
Down and down out of The Out the elevator ran. Down, down back to the black space racing past stars-novas-black-holes-white-holes-filled-with-walnut-trees-moonbeams-sunbeams-through-the-highest-heavens-past-planets-astroids-satellites



down-from-regular-high-heaven and back to earth. Seas. Land.



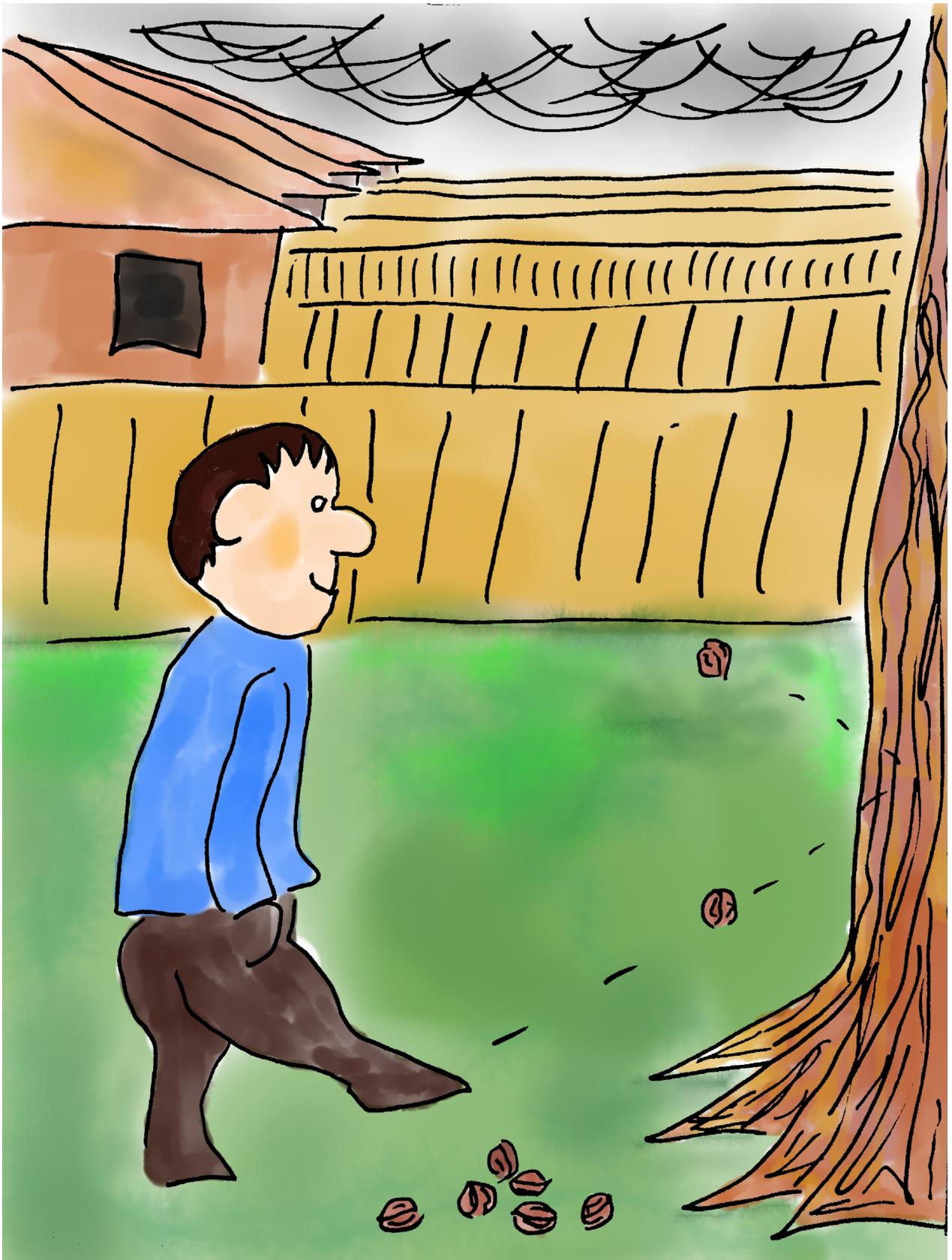
State. Town. Home. Grass.



He stepped out of the glass and looked around. There, in his backyard,



things weren't so...grey and lame and boring.



There, in his backyard...walnuts.

Author-- Lancelot Schaubert has published work in McSweeney's, Poker Pro, Encounter and other similar markets. For a day job, he edits the work of other authors. (U.S.A.)

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